

TRANSUBSTANTIATION IN ECCLESIASTICAL PHILOSOPHY

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(*Continued*)

Not until March 10, 1400, did the clergy gain their wish of having a statute against heresy, but too impatient to wait for this, they illegally fabricated a Common Law, putting forward without basis the doctrine that by Common Law the King had a right to issue a writ for the burning of a heretic. Action was taken in this illegal manner by issuing a writ of *De Haeretico Comburendo* against William Sawtrey, a London priest, who declaring himself unable to believe in Transubstantiation was soon reduced to a heap of ashes by the secular arm of kindly Mother Church. This took place February 26, 1400, shortly before the passage of the statute against heresy, the first victim under the latter being a poor tailor, John Badby, who when brought before his judges said that if every consecrated Host were the Lord's Body then there were twenty thousand Gods in England, which he could not believe, since he put his faith in a single omnipotent God. The Prince of Wales, afterward King Henry V, took a personal interest in Badby's cremation, and while the fire was burning up around the victim offered him a pardon with the additional allurements of a yearly pension if he would only acknowledge the truth of Transubstantiation. Priests bearing consecrated Hosts hovered around the stake and held up the bread that Badby might adore it before he died and thus save his soul. But the perverse heretic would not worship the wafer, and received in the flames his due penalty of death.

Even after Henry VIII had broken with Rome it was not safe to deny the Real Presence, and that monarch's Six Articles of 1449, called by the heretics The Whip with Six Strings, specified denial

of Transubstantiation as a heresy punishable by death at the stake, and threatened even those who accepted Transubstantiation with death as felons should they teach the necessity of communion in both kinds and insist that the laity as well as the priest ought to drink the Holy Blood. One notable sufferer was John Lambert, who was burned alive for denial of the Real Presence after trial before the king in person. Some years later, in 1546, Anne Askew, a young lady of twenty-five, was also convicted of denying that a piece of bread was God, and "Bluff King Hal" had her first tortured on the rack to make her disclose the names of other criminals guilty of disbelief in the Real Presence and then burned her at the stake in company with three other heretics.

Hus, whose thought had been greatly influenced by that of Wyclif, was accused of disbelief in Transubstantiation when he appeared before the Council of Constance. Witnesses stated he had declared that the "substance" (i. e. substratum) of the bread remained after consecration, saying that if this were not so he would like to know what was broken at communion. Hus denied the charge and affirmed he believed the consecrated wafer was "the very body of Christ which was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died and was buried, which rose from the dead on the third day and is now sitting at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty." Although this particular accusation was abandoned, the assembled clergy found enough heresy in the belief of the Bohemian Reformer to enable them to burn him at the stake.

Most of the adherents of Hus remained faithful to Transubstantiation, and took it so seriously that in the Hussite wars which ravaged Bohemia from 1419 to 1438 the most important question in dispute was the right of the laity as well as the priest to partake of the Holy Blood at communion. It is the custom of the Roman Church to allow the laymen to partake of the consecrated bread, but to reserve the wine for the officiating priest alone. This is partly to obviate the danger of spilling the "blood" on the floor, but chiefly to enhance the prestige of the priest. The Hussites, who held the teachings of Christ more authoritative than those of Popes and Councils, found in the Scriptures the words, "Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood drink indeed." (John vi. 54, 55). And they argued, quite

logically, that drinking the Holy Blood as well as eating the Holy Body was absolutely necessary for salvation. Hus himself did not preach this doctrine, but shortly before his death at Constance, endorsed it when Jacobellus of Mies pointed out the implications of the words recorded by John. The Hussites insisted on Utraouism, communion in both kinds, instead of the Subunism or communion under one kind prescribed by the Church. They and their opponents thus became known as Utraouists and Subunists, and early in the conflict the Bohemian insurgents inscribed a chalice on their banners that all might see for what they were fighting.

To obtain the Holy Blood by Transubstantiation of wine a duly ordained priest was necessary, and as the Utraquists were short of these they kidnapped a Catholic Subunist bishop and forced him to ordain enough priests to satisfy their needs. The Utraouists always denied any taint of heresy, and were themselves zealous heretic hounds. A sect they deemed heretical, the Adamites, arose in Bohemia, and were exterminated by the Hussites, fifty of them being burned at the stake on a single occasion. When in 1421 a Bohemian priest, Martin Loquis, reached the point of rejecting the Real Presence they seized him and one of his adherents, and after torturing the two severely, finished off the poor wretches by throwing them into boiling pitch.

In upholding Utraouism the Hussite leaders pointed out, quite correctly, that Subunism was a Roman innovation, the more conservative orthodox Churches of the East having always kept to the ancient custom of communion under both kinds. At the present day the Roman Catholic Church itself sanctions Utraquism among the faithful of the Uniate rites who are good Catholics, acknowledging the supremacy of the Pope. Usually in the Uniate churches the consecrated bread is mixed in the chalice with the wine and the two administered to the lay communicant with a spoon. Yet in Hussite times the crusaders of the Church that never changes killed at sight any priest they caught administering the Holy Blood to the laity. And more than one infallible Pope gave express sanction to the Crusades in which such things were done. Modern Catholic writers gloss over these facts, but admit that technically the Bohemians who received communion in both kinds were not heretics on this account. The question was one of Church discipline rather than dogma, and true heresy arose only when the efficacy of Subunist communion was denied.

The Roman view is that communion in both kinds is needless owing to the Totality of The Real Presence, a doctrine which by one of its yet unmentioned ramifications serves to justify the Subunist position. To the Council of Constance this part of the Totality doctrine was especially dear. The men who burned Hus laid down as a matter of faith that "It must be most firmly held that the Body and Blood of Christ are contained entire, both under the species of bread and under the species of wine." According to this doctrine, which is utterly extraneously to Scripture, there is present in every minute drop of the consecrated wine not only Christ's Blood but also the whole of His Body, and likewise in each *minimum divisibile* of the consecrated bread is present not merely His bloodless Body but His Body and Blood all entire. Now this, mark it well, can in no possible way be construed as the literal meaning of the words that the Bible attributes to Christ. He is nowhere quoted as saying of wine, "This is my body as well as my blood." The words (which believers must hold an Infallible Church has transmitted down from Aramaic through Greek to a perfectly correct Latin version) are "*Hic est sanguis meum*". "This is my blood." And likewise of bread the statement is "*Hoc est corpus meum*." The Roman Church, by the doctrine she has adopted has, beyond the shadow of a doubt taken the ground that Christ spoke of a part when He meant the whole—was using synecdoche. Thus the Church now takes precisely the stand for which she condemned Berenger; she gives a figurative meaning to the words which she says Christ uttered. If then any Roman Catholic plumes himself on accepting these words of Christ literally, his Protestant friend can courteously tell him that this is most certainly not the case; that if he is a good Catholic and adheres to the dogmas of his Church, he is absolutely refusing to accept in their literal sense the words by which the Eucharist was instituted.

In the beginning of the Bohemian conflict the Subunists showed their disapproval of Utraquism by branding a chalice on the flesh of the Hussites they caught, while the Utraquists retaliated by branding their prisoners with the sign of the cross. More severe measures were soon resorted to, as called for by Pope Martin V, who in 1420 formally declared a crusade against Bohemia to exterminate the Hussites and those who abetted them, plenary indulgence being promised to all taking part in the good work. From all over Europe Christian soldiers responded to the call of the

Holy Father and joined the Imperial forces. Bands of divinity students, recruited in Leipsic and other centers of learning, lent their aid and are said to have shown special zeal in carrying on the work of extermination. When the Utraquist peasants fled their farms were burned, and many perished of starvation. More were killed, men, women and children being indiscriminately slaughtered, and in Kuttensburg alone sixteen hundred Hussites were burned, thrown down the mines or killed in other ways. In battle, however the Subunist armies were time after time defeated by the Hussites who, headed by Ziska, held at bay all the forces the Pope and the German Emperor could bring against them. Finally, after many thousands of people had been killed and Bohemia and the surrounding countries laid waste, the Utraquists gained their point. The Council of Basle in 1433 accepted the Utraquist rite as allowable for Catholics in Bohemia and Moravia, where it was to be practiced side by side with that of the Subunists, the church saving her face in this reversal of herself by admonishing the Hussites to believe in the totality of the real presence, and not to imagine that Utraquism was essential to the validity of the sacrament.

Meanwhile, though most of the Hussites (the conservatives or Calixtines) continued to adhere to the doctrines, assent to which had been extorted from Hus under the shadow of the stake, there had again arisen a radical faction, the Taborites, who influenced by the writings of Wyclif held that the substratum of the bread (and wine) remained in place after consecration and that the body of Christ was only present "sacramentally." The Taborites naturally refused to accept the *Compacta* which marked them for destruction, but the Calixtines combined with the Subunists against them, and soon these recalcitrants were subdued and their leaders killed. Peace however was not permanent, for Rome felt it intolerable to continue the toleration she had been momentarily forced to grant, and in 1462 Pope Pius II declared the *Compacta* of Basle void. Once more the people of Bohemia butchered one another to make a Roman holiday, and continued doing so intermittently for several centuries. Utraquism was alternately permitted and prohibited by the rulers of Bohemia, but was finally outlawed after Bohemia lost the last vestige of her independence in 1620.

The Orthodox Greek schismatics agree with the Roman Catholics in upholding Transubstantiation; the Protestants do not. But this does not mean that at the Reformation all the Protestant

Churches repudiated the Real Presence. With the Lutherans the place of Transubstantiation was taken by the almost equally absurd doctrine of Consubstantiation, also called Companation. Luther held that the accidents of bread and wine do not lose their substrata in the Eucharistic ceremony. The wine simply gains the support of a new substratum, Christ's Blood, and the bread takes on, as its second substratum, the noumeon of Christ's Body. Thus instead of the new pair of noumena conflicting with the old, the two noumena, in each case, cooperate in peace and harmony. The Lutherans asserted that this was the accepted 'orthodox' view in the time of Saint John Chrysostom, the "Doctor of the Eucharist", as evinced by statements made in a letter from this Patriarch of Constantinople to Caesarius. The doctrine of Consubstantiation has sometimes found favor with High Church Anglicans, the famous Dr. Pusey having been one who advocated it.

Luther advocated Consubstantiation with all his customary fervor, and stigmatized as Sacramentarians all those who said Christ's Body and Blood were present in the Eucharist not really but only sacramentally. To the objections of more radical Reformers that the body of a man could not be in two places at once and could not be contained within the compass of a small wafer Luther turned a deaf ear. All geometrical and arithmetical truths were, he thought, beside the question. "I do not admit mathematics," said he to Zwingli at the Marburg conference, "God is above Mathematics." Nor could he be brought to reason by the query as to what purpose Christ could possibly have had to ask his followers to eat alive His actual flesh and drink His actual blood. Luther vehemently said: "If God ordered me to eat dung, I would do it without asking 'Why'." He even denounced the Catholic priesthood for lack of faith. There were at Rome, he indignantly tells us, priests who at Mass instead of using the proper words of consecration would cynically say to the Host, "Bread thou art, and bread thou shalt remain!"

These flippant priests who excited Luther's indignation might perhaps have found a kindred spirit in Erasmus, who although he gave a nominal adhesion to the doctrine of the Real Presence in recognition of the authority of the Church, showed he was a good Phenomenalist by saying plainly, "I do not see what function of a body cannot be apprehended by the senses." When visiting Sir Thomas Moore, Erasmus discussed the question of the Real Pres-

ence with his host who assured the great Humanist that if he would only believe he would be satisfied of its proof by unquestionable evidence. Erasmus on leaving More's house borrowed his pony, and finding it very useful did not return it, but instead sent More the following lines:

*Quod mihi dixisti, de corpore Christi
Credc quod edis, et edis,
Sic tibi rescribo, de tuo palfrido.
Credc quod habes et habes.*

These have been rendered as follows:

Remember you told me, believe and you'll see,
Believe 'tis a body and a body 'twill be,
So should you tire walking, this hot summer tide,
Believe your staff's Dobbin, and straightway you'll ride.

We can better understand Luther's position if we remember that in his life and death struggle with Rome he found his arguments drawn from the Scriptures everywhere blocked by the prevalent view of the permissibility of symbolic interpretation. To combat this he held fast to a strictly literal view, and raised the cry of the Bible for the common people, taking the stand that any man able to read could, without guidance of the learned, always comprehend what the sacred authors meant to convey. He was consistent in his position when at the Marburg conference between Lutherans and Zwinglians, (held in order to find some ground of agreement as to the Eucharist) he began by chalking on the table *Hoc est corpus meum*, to indicate that as this was Scripture he stood by it in its literal sense. Taking this ground it is difficult to deny the Real Presence, though Carlstadt, and before him the Waldenses, got over the difficulty by boldly asserting that when Jesus uttered these words he pointed, not at the bread, but at His own body. In justification Carlstadt argued that in the Greek text the word translated by "this" did not agree grammatically with the Greek word for bread, but had concord of gender with "body", and concluded that in "Take, eat, this is my body", only the first two words referred to the bread. When it is once admitted a passage in the Bible may be taken in a symbolic sense the way is open for more subtle arguments on both sides. How fine a distinction can be drawn may be seen from the fact that even at the present day

Catholic authors tell us that if Jesus had said, "This bread is my body" He might perhaps have been using symbolism, but that the simple affirmation: "This is my body" cannot possibly be construed as symbolic. Professor Pohle illustrates this contention with the pregnant suggestion that if, without any preliminary remark or subsequent explanation, you were to say of a piece of bread, "This is Napoleon" you would not be using a figure of speech but would be simply uttering nonsense.

Carlstadt well remarked that if Christ referred to the wine as His Blood He must have performed the miracle of transmutation in the bellies of his disciples as they had already drank it when He spoke. And literally interpreted the Bible bids us believe that at the Last Supper Jesus held His Body in His own hands, broke it into fragments and then handed these pieces of Himself to His disciples who ate them! Faced with the consequence of literal interpretation the orthodox theologian does not flinch, but quotes as an example of true faith the words of St. Augustine: "Christ was carried in his own hands when he commended his body, He said, 'This is my body', that body he carried in his own hands!" Zwingli, however, to whom the literalist view seemed utterly absurd, went so far as to say that no one had ever lived who truly believed in the Real Presence, a remark which so aroused Luther's ire as to make him actually rejoice on learning that Zwingli had been slain in the warfare between the Catholic and Protestant Cantons. And when at Worms in 1557 Melanchthon and eight other Lutheran divines gave out a manifesto against teachers of false doctrines, they enumerated rejection of infant baptism, denial of original sin, denial of trinitarianism and asserting the Eucharist to be a mere symbol as blasphemy for which death ought to be the legal punishment.

Zwingli held that Christ had merely intended His followers to partake of the bread and wine at communion in remembrance of his death, which he foresaw, and that in the ceremony the bread and wine were to serve as symbols of His body on the cross and the blood which flowed out of it. And he urged that figurative language was by no means foreign to Scripture, citing Exodus, xii, 21, where the injunction "Take you a lamb . . . and kill the passover" obviously requires the killing, not of the passover festival, but of the lamb. This view, the view of Luther and the view of the Catholic Church have one common merit: intellectual straightforwardness. It is otherwise with the doctrine of Calvin, who neither endorsed the

Zwinglian denial of a miracle in the Eucharist nor accepted the words of Christ in their literal sense, but calmly disregarding the latter, contended there took place in communion a miracle of which Scripture gives us no inkling at all.

In Calvin's view the blood and wine are "the signs which represent the invisible food which we receive from the body and blood of Christ," souls being "fed by Christ just as the corporeal life is sustained by bread and wine." Calvin was not however, he said, "satisfied with the view of those who, while acknowledging that we have some kind of communion with Christ only make us partake of the Spirit, omitting all mention of flesh and blood." And he asserted that "the end which this mystical benediction has in view" is "to assure us that the body of Christ was once sacrificed for us so that now we may eat it . . . that his blood was once shed for us so as to be our perpetual drink." Thus the bread and wine are symbols that the faithful really partake of the body and blood, and there is a real presence, says Calvin, though not a "local presence."

This doctrine of a "dynamic presence" as it is sometimes called, was put forward as a happy medium between the "substantial real presence" (or Real Presence, properly speaking) of Luther and the Catholics, and the symbolic view of the Zwinglians. The compromise found favor with some Lutherans, especially the adherents of Melancthon, and made them more tolerant of Calvinism than of Zwinglianism. But the former was regarded as a more insidious foe than the latter by the stricter Lutheran divines, who held, quite justly, that Calvin's doctrine was merely a denial of the Real Presence, cunningly clothed in words seeming to assert it. And the Melancthonian faction who refused to take this stand were denounced as Crypto-Calvanists and traitors to the Lutheran cause.

The official doctrine of Transubstantiation as laid down by the Church of Rome follows Duns Scotus in holding that the accidents of bread and wine do not become inherent in the noumenal Holy Body and Blood, but continue to exist unsupported by any substratum. The contrary view, that these accidents, instead of remaining unsupported, take root in the substrata of Body and Blood, is not permissible, and this heresy would be yet another theory of the Real Presence which might well be called Subpanation. It must be noted however that the names subpanation, impanation and companation are often used indiscriminately in designating any heretical doctrine of the Real Presence, and Lutherans sometimes em-

phasized their belief in the Real Presence by asserting the Holy Body is "*in, con, et sub pane*." Subpanation is really far more in harmony with the alleged words of Christ than either the Catholic or the Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence. For the Catholic, if consistent, would say of the Host: "This is not Christ's Body, in fact 'this' is not really here at all: only the bare accidents are present, but Christ's Body is here by the side of the accidents." And Luther, too, if precise, would have said: "This is Christ's Body and something else in the bargain; it is at once His Body and ordinary bread." Lutheran apologists saw that this was the case, and tried to get over the difficulty by arguing that Christ, when he said *Hoc est corpus meum*, must have been using synecdoche and speaking of the whole when He really meant only a part. And thus the ostensible principle of strictly literal interpretation was put aside, and the Lutherans took precisely the ground they had condemned the Zwinglians for taking—namely that Christ used figurative language in instituting the Eucharist.

Impanation, that theory of the Eucharist previously mentioned, asserts the presence, not of Christ's human Body, but of His Divine Essence: the Logos. If, it is contended, the Logos came down from Heaven and incarnated Himself in the body of a man, why might He not on other occasions again come down (bringing no body with Him) and impanate Himself in a loaf of bread, simultaneously invinating himself in a cup of wine? The possibility of such a thing was admitted by ecclesiastic philosophers who debated whether if Christ had come down in Palestine and took on the clothing of a pumpkin instead of that of flesh and blood He could not equally well have saved mankind. In the case of Impanation there would be a Hypostatic Union between Christ's Divine Soul and the noumena of the bread and the wine. And the bread and the wine would then serve much the same purpose that flesh and blood did in the Incarnation. So we have here a figurative sense in which Christ might have used "body" and "blood" at the Last Supper. The Impanation theory of the Real Presence seems to have been that held by Andreas Osiander, the Nuremberg Reformer, who much disliked the thought of eating meat from Christ's body, and it has also been ascribed to Rupert Deutz in the twelfth century and to the Jacobite Christians of Syria.

Transubstantiation, Varignon's Miniaturism, Consubstantiation, Dynamic Real Presence, Subpanation, Identification and Impana-

tion do not exhaust the possible theories of Real Presence. There is an eighth which holds that in the Eucharist there takes place merely what is called a Substantial Change, the primordial matter of the bread (and of the wine) not being driven away from its accidents, the substantial forms alone being cast into the outer darkness. This heresy was put forward by Durandus of St. Pourcain, the Doctor Resolutissimus, who said that it was at least possible, while any other *modus operandi* was inconceivable. In this theory, of course, the accidents of the bread (and of the wine) are supposed to be supported by the primordial matter part of the original substratum. The notion of accidents existing without anything to support them was never very attractive to the scholastics, and to relieve the troubled minds of philosophical believers the theory was broached at one time that, in lieu of a substratum, accidents might inhere in accidents. It was thought fitting to select the "most perfect" accident as support for the others, and some philosophers, holding whiteness to be the most perfect accident of bread, made all the other wafer-accidents inhere in this. St. Thomas Aquinas however thought that in the quantity of the dimensions (*i. e.* the quantitative width, depth and thickness) of the bread and the wine all the other accidents might inhere. Sometimes a still greater honor accrued to these "dimensions." For once in a blue moon God allowed His creatures to perceive by their senses that what they were consuming at communion was not bread and wine but flesh and blood. It was debated whether in such case the senses testified to an illusion or to a fact, and the decision was rendered that while ordinarily it was mere delusion, yet sometimes the Holy Body and Blood really revealed themselves to the senses in all their accidents save the dimensions. In this case consecration drove away not merely the old pair of noumena but likewise their accidents with the exception of the dimensions which by especial favor were allowed to remain on the altar. Possibly if modern priests knew the ritual employed by the ancient heretic Marcus they might be able to show the accidents of blood, if not body, at every Mass. For, as Iraneus tells us, Marcus when consecrating a cup of wine would by "extending the words of invocation to a great length" make it "appear purple and red, so that it seems as if the grace that is over all distills its blood into that cup at his invocation."

Those who believe that at Mass the communicant is eating, not bread, but the actual flesh of a God, naturally rate this food very

highly. Cyril of Jerusalem in the old days warned his communicants not to spill a single crumb of what was more precious than gold or jewels, while Ignatius describes the Host as "the medicine of immortality and the antidote that we should not die." And in 1910 Professor Pohle of the University of Breslau declared that the practice of eating the Divine Body "responds to the natural craving of the human heart after a food which nourishes unto immortality, a craving expressed in many pagan religions." "All that is beautiful, all that is true, in the religions of nature Christianity has appropriated to itself" says this modern theologian, who finds that Jesus Christ has been "wonderfully condescending in satisfying this noble craving by dispensing His Own flesh and blood."

A contrary impression is however made upon those not imbued with the prejudices of a "Christian" education, as is explained by a comment attributed to the philosopher Averroes. Entering a Christian Church one day and being present during Mass, he afterwards remarked: "How horrible! Can there be in all the world another sect so insane as the Christians who eat the God they adore!" Averroes declared, it is said, that there were three impossible religions: Judaism, a religion of children, Mohammedism, a religion of swine, and Christianity. His characterization of the last has been discretely left unrecorded by Christian historians, but judging from his remarks on the Eucharist he must have regarded it as a religion of lunatics. The reproach of Averroes, while applicable to the Christianity of the sect that gained dominion cannot justly be applied to the Christianity of Christ. It is highly improbable that the words ascribed to Jesus and used in justification of the Real Presence doctrine were ever uttered by Him. The introduction of barbaric rite of Theophagy probably came from an entirely different source. It is a far cry from the Sermon on the Mount to the inane "Mysteries" of the sect which gained the upper hand and has always distinguished itself by opposition to the real disciples of Christ.

Many people there are to whom criticism of a prevalent religious superstition is highly distasteful. They say, what is quite true, that their neighbor has a right to his own religious belief, but we cannot jump to from this to the conclusion that a belief to which one has "a right" is not dangerous. Superstition has its dark as well as its light side, and those who are shocked at seeing the latter brought forward must be reminded that the former also exists and that su-

perstition is the mother of bigotry and intolerance. History teaches us that belief in the Real Presence has been by no means a harmless superstition. Through it there has been nurtured hostility not only towards Christian heretics but also towards people outside the fold. Believers were taught that the Jews took great delight in surreptitiously getting hold of consecrated Hosts and engaging in the sport of transfixing them with knives. Thus ill-treated the Host would miraculously bleed where it had been stabbed. And whenever it was desired to excite the mob into a pogrom against their Jewish neighbors this could quickly be done by spreading fantastic tales about the rough treatment a piece of bread had endured at the hands of the Jews. Ecclesiastical history tells us of the "perpretration of many such outrages by the Jews" in the year 1370. The usual miracles took place and the miraculous Hosts were subsequently gathered together and put on exhibition in the church of Sainte GEDURE in Brussels. There they were still shown a few years ago. Each year (in the first decade of the twentieth century and probably even yet) there was held in this church a celebration to commemorate—not helpful and inspiring words; not deeds of mercy and charity—but impossible injuries inflicted upon wheaten wafers and impossible miracles wrought by them in crying for vengeance. And such commemorations have as natural concomitant the fostering of feelings of animosity towards that part of the human race of which Christ was a member.

⁵Able and interesting discussions of this question will be found in F. C. Conybeare's *Myth, Magic and Morals*, Chapter XIV, and in Preserved Smith's *Short History of Christian Theopagy* (Open Court Pub. Co. 1922).